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ABSTRACT

This paper presents information culled from a study of 200 publications about innovative approaches towards achieving universal primary education (UPE) and its democratization. The first part of the paper addresses the topics of children's right to primary education, the role of primary education in eradicating adult illiteracy, and the difficulty in formulating a definition of UPE. The first section also presents data on current enrollment, gender disparities, and causes of nonattendance in primary education. The second part of the paper discusses nonformal approaches to UPE. Described are: (1) the target groups of UPE; (2) UPE's structural and methodological features, teacher training, finances and resources; and (3) policymaking involved with nonformal approaches. Nonformal UPE programs from India, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Cameroon, and Sudan are highlighted. The third part of the paper considers various issues involved with educational planning and research. The fourth part discusses problems and issues that arise in the relationship between formal, nonformal, and informal educational approaches. A reference list of about 80 titles, extracted from the original 200 reviewed publications, is included. (BC)

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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION AND ITS DEMOCRATIZATION
A SYNOPSIS

by

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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION AND ITS DEMOCRATIZATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to present a synopsis of significant experiences of innovative approaches towards achieving universal primary education (UPE) and its democratization prepared from a study of the available published materials pertaining to this field. The synopsis is based on the study of about 200 publications including books; reports of conferences, seminars and workshops; reviews; national case studies and country reports; research papers and journal articles related to UPE. Of these, a selected bibliography of about 80 publications has been compiled and is attached to this paper as an appendix.

2. THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

2.1 Primary Education as a Right of the Child

There is an urgent need to provide Basic Education to all children during the 1990's so that they can meet the challenges of the 21st century. Universal Primary Education (UPE) is indispensable for the eradication of illiteracy and the attainment of this basic level of education, which is in turn the foundation for further learning throughout life. The availability and quality of primary education are therefore of major significance for the success of each person's inescapable process of lifelong education.

A century ago UPE was still a utopian ideal, even in many of the richer, industrially developed countries where it has now become the norm. UPE is spreading, both as a worldwide goal of national education policies and as a reality, and children's right to education has been acknowledged in internationally accepted principles. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights states that everyone has the right to education, and that elementary education shall be free. In 1959 the United Nations General Assembly adopted in addition the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, according to which:

> "The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture, and enable him on a basis of equal opportunity to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society." (Principle 7)

The importance of free and compulsory primary education for all children is further emphasized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN in 1989 (Article 28 (a).

Eradication of illiteracy and provision of a basic level of education for all has been a major concern of Unesco as reflected in the Second Medium Term Plan (1984-1989) and through its Major Programme II, Education for All, attempts were made on a global scale to promote general access to education to eradicate illiteracy and to provide a satisfactory level of initial education to all. This attempt is being continued and further stressed in the Third Medium Term Plan (1990-1995) in Programme 1.1: Towards Basic Education for All.

2.2 The Role of Primary Education in Literacy

The key role played by primary level (or initial or basic level) of education in the struggle to eradicate adult illiteracy is quite clear. All those children who have not had the opportunity of acquiring a minimum level of literacy and numeracy skills during the early stages of their life enter the adult world as illiterates to increase the adult illiteracy population. And the number in this category is quite large:

> *"One out of two children in the developing countries to-day does not enjoy the benefit of a full cycle of primary education ... If the present trends are allowed to continue, by the year 2000 the number of illiterates aged 15 years and over is estimated to exceed 900 million" (Unicef-Unesco Joint Working Group, 1984, p. 7).*

"The alarming prospects are that millions of children of primary school age will have no opportunity to attend school and consequently will join the ranks of the adult illiterate population of whom over 60 per cent will be women" (ibid, p. 5).

Hence the Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) and the completion of the primary cycle by all the children are deemed to be essential prerequisites for the successful eradication of adult illiteracy.

While on the one hand, failure to achieve UPE leads to an increase in adult illiteracy, the existence of adult illiteracy, on the other hand, may be considered as one of the obstacles to the achievement of UPE. Such a conclusion is based on the observation that illiterate parents are lacking in a sense of deep commitment and motivation to enrol their children in school and ensure that they remain there to complete at least the elementary stage. It is believed that a high adult literacy rate of about 70 per cent is the critical threshold for achieving UPE in developing countries. The link between illiteracy and failure to achieve UPE, therefore, is such that they thrive on each other constituting a vicious circle. Hence the importance of considering adult literacy and primary education as two aspects of the same problem cannot be over-emphasized.

2.3 Universalization of Primary Education (UPE)

Since universal primary education means different things to different people, Hawes (1983) discusses the difficulty in attempting to formulate a generally acceptable single definition of UPE. The various interpretations of the term UPE range from a functional concept adopted by the Unesco meeting of the Member States of Asia in Karachi in 1959 which refers to the "first stage seeking to achieve compulsory schooling for at least five years with a view to ensuring permanent functional literacy" (APEID Regional Meeting on Universalization of Primary Education, 1983, p. 43) to something wider but vague as the definition used by the Commonwealth Secretariat:

> *"that stage of educational practice where, by conscious effort, communities attempt to make opportunities for learning and self-improvement available to all their people" (Hawes, 1983, p. 125).*

He points out that the various definitions cover a number of alternatives such as:

- universal attendance
- universal capacity
- universal accessibility

and asserts that criteria of universality will vary and are dependent on historical, economic and political factors (ibid, p. 127).

The criteria of universality have both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. It should be noted in this regard that compulsory primary education and UPE in a numerical sense do not guarantee a high rate of literacy because there is evidence that "some countries with relatively high enrolment ratios are still to be found in the group of illiterate countries" (Fischer, 1982, p. 157). Ahmed refers to the "naive confidence" that existed in the 1960's regarding UPE:

> *The question of the universalization of primary education and the elimination of illiteracy in Africa, Asia and Latin America, of course, had been raised in the 1960's and with naive confidence it was believed that the problem would be solved by the 1980's. By the end of the 1960's, the realisation had already dawned that it was not just a numbers game, that the individual and social purpose of education were not automatically served by the linear expansion of the existing system, and that the numerical targets could not be attained globally without rethinking the nature and functions of the educational programmes. Although the tyranny of numbers could not be escaped, the original goal of quantitative expansion was broadened to include the reexamination of the premises regarding the structures, content, process and goals of education (Ahmed, 1982, p. 134).*

A deeper analysis of the concept of UPE which, therefore, becomes necessary in the context of literacy and lifelong education suggests that the emphasis should not be limited to the arithmetic of enrolment and the number of years in a given institution but should be extended to cover the *quality* - the

aims, content and level of achievement - deemed adequate to provide the minimum knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by an individual to initiate a lifelong learning process and enhance his or her educability as envisaged, for example, as 'basic education' in the Faure Report (Faure, et.al., p. 184) and the Kirpal Committee Report (Meeting of Experts on the Basic Cycle of Study, 1974, p. 4). In order to achieve this aim, it becomes necessary to review the conventional structures of primary education, the content and the delivery systems; and to investigate the possibility of introducing innovative approaches to overcome various obstacles to UPE and the deficiencies of the existing system. The problem to be overcome is two-fold: providing access to and effective participation in primary or equivalent educational opportunities for all children; and literacy and numeracy courses leading to primary education equivalence for youth seeking a second chance to further their education.

2.4 The Present Status - Reality and Prospects

In their efforts to achieve the goals of UPE many countries in the 60's and 70's focused their attention on the expansion and strengthening of the formal school system. However, an analysis made on the basis of the latest statistics leads to the conclusion that in spite of these efforts "in many Developing Countries, the two major goals in education - the provision of basic education for all and the eradication of illiteracy by the year 2000 - still remain distant targets looming far away on the horizon" (Unesco, 1989, p. i).

Enrolment in primary education

The following are some of the disquieting features observed in the 1980's concerning Developing Countries in this Unesco survey:

- Enrolment rates at the primary education level have risen in the 80's but even in 1990, there are 33 countries in which the enrolment rates for the 6-11 age group is less than 60% (27 in Africa, 4 in Asia, 2 in Latin America and the Caribbean).

- The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for primary level education has declined or fluctuated in 35 out of 105 Developing Countries, 20 of these being in Africa and 10 in Asia. These countries have only managed to enrol a small portion of their primary school-age population.

- Despite unparalleled growth in enrolment, assuming that the ratios of 95 per cent or more is the criterion for distinguishing countries which have either reached or practically attained UPE, only 57 out of 105 countries accounting for three quarters of the primary school age population in the Developing Countries may be said to have attained this objective. In other words, one out of four children lived in countries where UPE had not been achieved (about 4 out of every five in Africa).

- The enrolment projections for the first level for the year 2000 suggest that UPE may be considered as not having been achieved in 36 countries (26 in Africa, 7 in Asia, 3 in Latin America and the Caribbean).

- As regards age-groups 12-17 years, the numbers out-of-school in the year 2000 would be: Asia - 191 million; Africa - 54 million.

- Another established target, parity of enrolment between the sexes still remains to be achieved. In fact, this is one of the major obstacles to the achievement of UPE.

- In the year 2025, Africa would have almost 47 million children aged 6- 11 years not enrolled in schools.

Gender disparities

The difference between male and female gross enrolment ratios (percentage points) at the first level for Developed and Developing Countries are as follows:

	1960	1987	2000
Developed Countries	2	1	1
Developing Countries	30	16	11
Africa	24	16	11
Asia and the Pacific	35	18	13
Arab States	30	21	11

(Source: Unesco, 1989)

This disparity in enrolment between the sexes and the low participation of females is considered to be a major obstacle to achieving UPE.

Out-of-School Youth. Both Sexes (Millions)

	Age-Group 6-11			Age-Group 12-17		
Region	1985	2000	2025	1985	2000	2025
Developed Countries	9.7	9.4	9.0	16.1	8.9	5.0
Developing Countries	133.7	117.5	96.6	283.4	259.3	275.6
of which:						
Africa	37.4	39.7	46.9	40.8	53.6	86.1
Latin America & Caribbean	8.8	6.7	4.9	18.4	14.2	10.1
Asia & Pacific	86.6	70.4	44.1	223.9	191.3	179.3

(Source: Unesco, 1989)

The survey concludes that the enrolment projections provide a disquieting view as regards the attainment of UPE by the end of this century or even by the year 2025 and serve to reinforce the concerns with respect to the eradication of illiteracy.

Why has one of the major goals in education in Developing Countries, the attainment of UPE, not yet been realized in spite of the concerted efforts and resources invested on it? Is the shortage of schools and classroom places the cause for it? Unesco's statistical analysis provides the answer that "for Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, it may be said that at the regional level there are enough school places to enrol all children of primary school age" (Unesco, 1989, p. 12). What then are the main causes for this phenomenon?

Causes of non-attendance

In spite of the availability of schools and classroom places a substantial proportion of children continued to remain outside school for various reasons. Several causes have been traced; some of which are easily defined such as inaccessibility of schools or mobility of parents, but all are interconnected in a complex nexus of economic and social factors:

Inaccessibility

In some areas schools were not found within easy access due to difficult geographical conditions (e.g., isolated small islands, mountainous regions, sparsely populated isolated village settlements, etc.).

Mobility of Parents

Even in those countries where school education is still inadequate, the enrolment and literacy rates among the nomads are frequently lower than those observed for the sedentary population as a whole. The Gypsies in the twelve Member States of the European Economic Community offer a typical example: between 30 and 40 per cent of their children attend school more or less regularly while the illiteracy rate among adults often exceeds 50 per cent (Pauvert, 1989).

Poverty

Parents living under conditions of extreme poverty with resources which are barely sufficient for their survival are unable to send their children to school because even when tuition is free, there are marginal expenses of education to cover costs of books, clothes and materials. Furthermore, conditions of extreme poverty contibute to malnutrition, ill-health and culturally impoverished home environments which seriously affect schooling.

Child Labour

Closely linked to parental poverty is the problem of child labour. Some children have no choice but to work, to help to support their families or to support themselves, so that they cannot attend fulltime school. Those children engaged in seasonal undertakings, as in agriculture, may have at least part of their school year disrupted, and in subsistence economies the loss of a child's labour is a significant cost to the family. Moreover, employers who engage and exploit children have an interest in continuing the arrangement because child labour is cheap.

Gender Discrimination

As shown earlier, girls are markedly under-represented in school enrolment and attendance in some countries. The great disparity between countries in respect to female enrolment reflects varied economic and social perceptions and realities. The most significant are that girls are held to be a greater economic asset in domestic pursuits than boys, and from a younger age and that expenditure on girls' education has no visible return in the context of their future occupations as women. In some countries there are social taboos against girls attending mixed classes, and being taught by male teachers.

Sociopolitical Disadvantage

Members of indigenous or migrant minorities, defined by ethnicity, class, caste, language or some other indicator, may not be provided with suitable schooling, or may reject the formal system of the majority as alien.

Negative Perceptions of the Uses of Literacy

Parental literacy and children's completion of primary education show a close correlation, and a high adult literacy rate of some 70% is the threshold for achieving UPE by conventional means. Illiterate parents may not appreciate the value of education and hence lack the motivation to enrol their children in school. Hence, illiteracy and failure of UPE thrive on each other and constitute a vicious circle.

The problem of drop-outs and erratic attendance

Even in countries where there is an apparently high enrolment rate, a large proportion of children drop out before reaching a basic level of education. In India, for example, enrolment in grades I-V (ages 6-11) is already 94%, but drops to 50% for grades VI-VIII (ages 11-14), UNICEF lists 33 countries where fewer than 50% of those enrolled in Grade I finish primary education, so that in extreme cases a low initial enrolment rate is more than

halved again by drop-outs (e.g., Chad, 38% enrolment, of which 29% completion; Bhutan, 25% enrolment, 25% completion), (UNICEF, 1988, pp. 70-71).

3. NONFORMAL APPROACHES AS AN ALTERNATIVE

3.1 The Need

The present status of UPE as discussed above indicates that attempts made so far to fulfil the basic task of achieving the target of UPE and completion of primary education by all through the expansion and strengthening of the formal school system have not brought effective returns in many developing countries. Such efforts have been limited mainly to the increase in the geographical coverage of territory to improve the accessibility of schools while maintaining the standard conventional practices pertaining to the content and methodology. While presenting the United Nations 1978 Assessment (The Expanding World of Learners: 1950-2000) of the demographic aspect of the growth of learning needs in the world, Coombs states that:

> *"As important as formal education is, it must be recognized that a large portion of the burgeoning learning needs in both developing and developed countries lie beyond its reach and competence ..." (Coombs, 1982, pp. 146-148).*

Attempts to universalize primary education on a full-time basis through the formal system has been described as a 'Sisyphean policy' that is not viable in most developing countries (Kurrien, 1983, p. 181). The problem of developing countries not having succeeded in their efforts to find a place in school for every child of the school-going age, and keep him there long enough to acquire permanent literacy while substantially larger allocations for the purpose are now available than at any earlier period has received much attention. The failure is attributed to many reasons among which the more significant ones are: poverty, social and cultural deprivations and the rigidity of the formal school including the irrelevance of its curriculum.

In spite of the fact that considerable budgetary allocations are being made for primary education in the formal system, it is estimated that there are over 100 million school-aged children who are unenrolled in schools in the world. Even in the case of those who are enrolled, there still exists the phenomenon of early drop-outs who do not acquire even the minimum literacy skills needed to lead a fruitful life. There is also a problem of insufficient achievement of those who pass through the system. In this context suitable measures should be taken to ensure that drop-outs from the formal school need not necessarily be drop-outs from a learning system that should be in existence in all societies.

The existence of sizeable numbers of children who are unable to participate in the formal system in many countries, therefore, creates a real and urgent demand to search for nonformal and alternative approaches, structures and pertinent curricula to supplement and complement the efforts made through the formal school system to provide primary level education for all. It may be noted that in addition to the nonformal alternatives "priority actions directed at strengthening *informal* learning opportunities by enriching the rural environment are also suggested" (Coombs, Prosser, Ahmed, 1973, p. 93).

3.2 The Target Group

Nonformal and alternative approaches for education at the primary level are directed mainly towards the following categories of learners:

- unenrolled children
- school drop-outs
- special population groups in terms of their particular situation and environment (e.g., girls, disadvantaged groups, nomads)
- adults who have been deprived of primary education.

In a discussion on "the arithmetic of achieving universal primary education" Frederiksen refers to the effect of high population growth, high levels of repetition and drop-outs on the struggle to reach UPE (Frederiksen, 1983,

p. 141). The problem involved in enrolling the "ultimate or last 10%" and catering to their needs has received special attention (Williams, 1983, p. 159). School failure is considered to be one of the most serious and widespread problems confronting primary education today. The thirty-ninth session of the International Conference on Education, October 1984 has reviewed this problem at an international level (Garcia Garrido, 1986, p. 229). Much attention has been drawn in the literature to social as well as educational factors responsible for drop-outs as well as "push-outs" (see for example, Fordham, 1980, p. 41).

Lower participation rates for girls in primary education is seen to be one of the main obstacles in achieving full UPE in many countries (see for example, Unesco Principal Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, 1987).

> *"The core of the solution to the problem of universalization of primary education, therefore, lies in taking education to girls in the rural areas" (Naik, 1985, p. 3).*

Even in countries which have already achieved considerable progress in UPE, there exists a problem with minorities and marginal or disadvantaged groups. The most frequently mentioned groups belong to the following categories (Garcia Garrido, 1986, p. 220):

- rural marginalization
- socio-economic marginalization
- ethnic and linguistic minorities
- immigrant workers.

3.3 Non-conventional Structures, Institutions and Programmes

Many countries have made attempts to set up alternative non-conventional education structures to cater to the educational needs of non-school goers and early school leavers which were designed to supplement and complement the conventional formal system. They had certain unique features attributed to them

in being flexible and adaptable, able to produce quick results, need-based, innovative and economical. Different dimensions of such alternative delivery systems provide an insight into the potentialities of these approaches (Unesco Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1989, pp. 9-18).

Examples of non-conventional and nonformal approaches to primary level education cover a wide range of structures and practices from large scale nationally implemented state-controlled or supported projects to small scale community projects initiated by volunteers and non-governmental organizations. Countries such as China, India and Indonesia which have NFE structures within their national educational systems have developed extensive nonformal progammes as alternatives to the formal system (see, for example, APEID Technical Working Group Meeting on Alternative Structures Linking Formal and Nonformal Education with Special Emphasis on Universalization of Education, 1978; and Ranaweera, 1989). Examples of projects for special categories such as girls (Naik, 1986); children of nomads in Algeria (Bensalah, 1987); "Parking Boys" of Nairobi (Gichuru, 1984); Street Boys of Bogotá (Armengol, et al., 1989); the Mobile Tent School of the Philippines for mobile ethnic tribes (Lasam, in Ranaweera, 1989); the "Cheli Beti" programme in Nepal for peasant women and their daughters (Chlebowska, 1987); the Mobile School Network for children of itinerant families (e.g., gypsies) in the suburbs of Paris (A.S.E.T. 1989) and the L'Ecole Nomade of Mali illustrate the wide range and variety of innovative arrangements that are already in existence.

There are several examples of primary level programmes for children organized as an extension of mass literacy campaigns for adults. The Ethiopian National Literacy Campaign, for example, is targetted to include children from age 8 upwards. Several other countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Zambia have also concentrated more on mass literacy programmes as their main alternative strategies to cope with the needs of illiterate children and young adults (Ranaweera, 1989).

The literature contains references to national and sub-national programmes that had been initiated in several countries which are imaginative and innovative to varying degrees, to explore the feasibility of various alternative methods of providing learning opportunities for the deprived children in rural areas. Some of them were "comprehensive" projects which were designed as substitutes for the formal school and others were "limited aspect" projects meant to supplement existing programmes and to remedy some of their defects. A brief description of selected examples of such innovations from different parts of the world is given below (Unesco, 1985).

The Gandhian Basic Education Project (Wardha Scheme)

This project took its special character from the life experiences and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. It was essentially a process by which all people, even the most deprived were expected to learn to lead productive lives in which mental and manual skills were used together by individuals to create and maintain self-sufficiency as members of their community. Gandhi's twin concerns were to bring elementary education to all the villages, and to avoid the unfortunate situation where educated youth came to despise manual work and were sometimes physically ill-prepared for it. Craft-based education was expected to solve both these problems: craft work could render the schools financially self-sufficient and thus overcome the chief obstacle to universal primary education which was the lack of finance; craft work if studied scientifically, would engender an interest in manual work and thus dissipate the prevailing attitude of contempt. The concept was based on the principle that the disciplined practice of a craft to a high standard, and the experience of contributing to the costs of schooling through craft work was a means of achieving the principal objective of education - "the development of character".

Gandhi believed that the generalized objective of covering the existing school curriculum could be accomplished (with some reservations) simultaneously with the craft training objective. Later, Gandhi's concept was expanded to include also the study of the social and natural environment, and the idea of correlating the various studies to craft work was extended to include correlation with the natural and social environment. In the 7 year Basic Education Programme, pupils were expected to spend 60 percent of their time engaged in craft work and also gain command of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy (Sinclair, 1976; Veda Prakasha, 1984).

The Nuclear System

Three Andean States, Peru, Bolivia and Equador devised the so-called Nuclear System to find a solution to problems in their countries posed by the existence of marginal social groups and topographical conditions which made communication exceptionally difficult over considerable areas. Within these areas schools were under-equipped and were isolated from each other and the communities which they served. The Nuclear System was devised to alleviate this situation by extending the limited and scarce resources, lessening their paralyzing isolation and enabling the schools to interpenetrate and interrelate with the community. The basic plan consisted of establishing links between existing schools within a homogeneous district and selecting one school to serve both as a model and as a co-ordinating centre for the exchange of experiences and facilities. The system gradually expanded from the initial notion of a network radiating from a central school to a larger complex with provision for stimulating community participation. Thus, the central school of the nucleus was equipped to offer, in addition to its existing programme, a literacy programme with a strong practical orientation including such options as health, agriculture and animal husbandry.

In this scheme, the school which still remains as a key element in the educational pattern, is seen not as a symbol of detached academic speculation but as one of the elements of an integrated system whose structures, methods, curricula, etc. are moulded so as to tie the school directly to the social environment. Nuclearization is ultimately aimed at completely merging the school with the entire social fabric. The nuclear schools, in addition to imparting education, were also designed to serve a useful function in rural development.

Integrated Community Education Project (Comilla) in Bangladesh

The educational programme of the Comilla Project was conceived as an integral part of the comprehensive rural development programmes, the most important principle underlying it being the creation of an intellectual mechanism for generating relevant knowledge, self-development skills and commitment. Educational programmes developed with a special emphasis on the primary school have the following innovative features. The students are organized under a programme called "Sabuj Sangha" which encourages them to carry out projects both in school and out of school (at home or in the community). Various types of projects - cultural, agricultural, arts and crafts - graded according to the ages of the children are organized and appropriate training is given in the school. The parents, members of the community and the community organizations are all involved in these projects. Students, teachers and community members work together in school works programmes for effecting repairs and improving physical facilities of schools. In addition to the economic gains, this has a considerable educational value in that it helps to develop employable skills and inculcates good attitudes and values in the minds of the children. Also, the work experience helps the children to use their book knowledge in real life situations. Apart from the activities of the students, some other structural changes such as in-service practical

training programmes in agriculture, animal husbandry, family planning, etc. for teachers, system of "feeder schools" in village mosques to relieve excessive overcrowding in schools were also introduced. The school extended its effective teaching staff by employing, on a part-time basis, model farmers and getting assistance from technical personnel in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, health and sanitation, etc. to train students in various project activities.

Kwamsisi Community Education Centre, Tanzania

A curriculum which fosters the integration of the school with the village and responds to the needs of the local community has been developed at the Kwamsisi Community Education Centre in Tanzania. It is a pilot project through which are being explored ways and means of linking education to the life of rural communities and of developing a more relevant and meaningful school curriculum. The experiment is based on the Tanzanian African socialist philosophy and the concept of Ujamaa villages. The project was planned jointly by government officials and members of the local community, taking into consideration the opinions, needs and aspirations of the local people. The curriculum for the upper grades of the primary school was defined in four areas: literacy and numeracy, citizenship, self-help and cultural activities, and community studies. While the first area corresponds to the normal primary school curriculum in all respects, the other areas brought in non-traditional and innovative learning experiences - e.g., child's relationship with and obligations to his family, village and society, self-help, maintenance of the school, preservation and growth of national culture, skills and attitudes necessary for good health, farming and life in the village. Each curriculum area was developed around a topic of interest and worked out on a flexible time table. Self-help activities were of two types: those associated with the running of the school and those in co-operation with the village as joint

development projects. The day-to-day work plan of the school is organized by the Self-Help Committee comprising fourteen students, the Head Teacher, a teacher and two members of the Village Council. The school is closely integrated with the community where villagers and children happily work side by side at joint development tasks or at traditional crafts or enjoying themselves in sports and cultural activities.

The Ruralized Primary School - Cameroon

It was recognized that the existing primary schools were cut off from the natural and human environment, which was essentially rural, thus making the school work abstract, boring and meaningless to a vast majority of children. In order to eliminate this maladjustment, it was thought that the old type of school and the traditional teacher must be replaced by a rural school and a rural teacher. The concept of "ruralization" of primary education thus evolved. Ruralization of the primary school was expected to make it "a centre of influence in the community". The education imparted will have two aspects: firstly, children will be taught the basic skills which will enable them to understand the world in which they live and be able to make use of the natural resources available to them; secondly, they must also be able to put these skills into good use. The school should, therefore, not only awaken the child's interest in doing practical tasks in his environment, but even take responsibility for cultivating and tending a field or an orchard. In order to ensure that a dual system will not exist, it was decided that the rural primary school will be the only primary school, whether in town or country. The rural primary school teacher is called a "teacher-community leader" in order to emphasize his new dual role: an in-school function to educate pupils according to the new perspective; an out-of-school function to organize adult community activities.

IREC Primary School - Sudan

The primary school of the Integrated Rural Education Centre, Sudan is an institution offering a six-year primary school programme appropriate for rural living to meet basic education needs of rural children. The curriculum takes due cognizance of the rural environment and is directed towards the development of skills and attitudes relevant to manual work and rural life.

In this process the school utilizes the potentialities, resources and facilities of the rural community and puts its own facilities and resources at the services of the village community and becomes an integral part of that community. The local environment is the basis source from which the curriculum content is derived. Observation, analysis, discovery and problem-solving based on the resources of the rural community constitute the essence of the teaching approach. Out-of-school informal and extra-curricula activities supplement and become an essential component of the regular school programme. Parents and members of the local community participate in the activities of the school and often serve as resource persons. IREC schools established in areas where there are no regular schools have catch-up programmes which adapt the primary school programmes for rural youth (10-15 years) who have missed the chance to attend school.

The Bhumiadhar Project - India

The primary level pilot project in Bhumiadhar, India is an example of an attempt to provide primary education to school drop-outs through part-time courses using a nonformal approach so that they might later re-enter a formal school. One important feature of this programme is that educational activities are intimately linked with community development activities. Classes are held in the evenings using a school building which is occupied by the regular school only in the morning. Most of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and

values are being developed in the children through work-experience. Some fundamentals of languages, arithmetic, science and social studies are also given to the children. It has no fixed time table and is open to the children at their convenience. The children get an education not only during the hours they spend at the centre, but also from their domestic work. The parents and the community members are being trained through the community development programme to help their children work more systematically and become more productive.

The following, among others, are some interesting examples of alternatives to conventional primary schooling cited by Coombs, Posser and Ahmed (1973):

Upper Volta - An Alternative to Conventional Primary Schooling

> Upper Volta's Rural Education System is an all too rare example of an effort to provide a workable alternative to the conventional primary school and its follow-up in a situation where such schooling can be afforded only on an extremely modest scale. This relatively larger, unconventional programme - the object of considerable controversy - combines the equivalent of lower primary schooling with practical agricultural and other rural skill training for unschooled teen-agers over a three-year period.

Thailand - A Large-Scale School Equivalency Programme

> This "second chance" programme in Thailand - under the Ministry of Education - enables out-of-school adolescents (boys and girls) with four years' of primary schooling to complete the equivalent of the next three primary grades and three grades at the secondary level and obtain an official school certificate in less than half the time and at a fraction of the cost of regular schools.

Primary School Equivalency Programmes

Some countries have developed primary school equivalency programmes to give a "second chance" to unschooled youth and drop-outs to remedy their primary education deficiencies. The following are some examples:

> "ACPO in Colombia offers, among other things, literacy training and primary school equivalency for out-of-school young people through radio lessons and related booklets. In East Africa, programmes in Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia use radio and correspondence for formal education equivalency for older adolescents and adults. The aim of Upper Volta's rural education

> centres is to combine basic primary education and agricultural training for adolescents in rural areas without enough primary schools. Thailand has started part-time courses at the upper primary and secondary levels as a "second chance" for older adolescents".

A closer examination of the content and learning/teaching methodology of these programmes reveals that many of them are non-conventional only to the extent that their structures are different from those of the conventional formal system; and that the content, methods and materials are often not very different from those used in formal primary schools. Since many programmes make use of primary school teachers of the formal system as part-time teachers without giving them adequate training in nonformal methodology, it is inevitable that they adopt methods and use materials that are familiar to them. There are, of course, several examples of programmes where the content and methodology have been suitably adapted to meet the needs of learners in nonformal settings, particularly with the participation of the learners, instructors and members of the local community (see, for example, Naik, 1985). It is clear that those small innovative projects organized at the local (city or village) level with maximum participation by the local community at all stages of planning and implementation have a much greater claim to be genuinely "alternative" than the larger state-controlled projects.

It is asserted in most of the literature that the success of alternative approaches depend to a great extent on the degree of involvement of the participants in the determination of their own programmes; the local community in the planning and management process; and the extent of the collaboration of various governmental and non-governmental agencies besides the Ministries of Education (or Nonformal Education) which are normally expected to be responsible for these programmes. The extent to which the community could contribute to the success of a project is demonstrated by the 'Village Education Committee' approach adopted in the action-research project on UPE in Pune, India (Naik, 1985, p. 8).

3.4 Some Structural and Methodological Features of Nonformal Approaches

The non-conventional initiatives in this survey have certain common characteristics which, if properly harnessed, have certain capacities to meet the basic learning needs of the above-mentioned target groups more effectively than through the formal system. The most significant factor, among others, is the flexibility that is characteristic of these initiatives with regard to:

- age range in relation to level of course
- place of holding classes
- grade structure within a group
- frequency and timing of classes
- regularity of attendance
- teaching methodology and content of curriculum
- curricular demands for accreditation
- modes of evaluation and testing

The age-group of learners for whom these are designed varies but, in general, they cater to the 9-15 age group. Some countries have programmes for children below 9 years and the programme for those above 15 years are generally classified as adult education programmes.

Many countries make use of the physical and human resources of the formal system to implement nonformal programmes, e.g., school buildings and formal school teachers are utilized after normal school time to run nonformal classes. When such facilities are not available or suitable, the learners and instructors jointly locate suitable centres in a public or private building to suit the convenience of both parties.

The learning arrangements are made flexible in order to suit the needs of the learners. The face-to-face instruction is generally for 2-3 hours a day. There may also be special types of classes to meet special needs where the time duration is even more flexible (e.g., as in morning study classes, mid-

day classes, night classes, every-other-day classes, breaktime classes, mobile classes, etc. in China). The nonformal education programme is compressed to be completed in a shorter period of time than the formal primary education programme (e.g., in India, 5 years of formal compressed to 2 years of nonformal. In Venezuela, 9 years of formal to 6 years of nonformal). The nonformal classes do not follow the rigid grade structure of the formal system with fixed entry and exit points. There are multi-grade classes and flexible entry and exit points. Also, the learner is allowed to progress at his own pace.

In most countries, face-to-face instruction is the most important modality used. Some countries use distance education techniques in addition to face-to-face instruction. Self-learning modules are used, for example, in Indonesia. Radio and TV are being increasingly used where such facilities are available, e.g., Inda-radio and TV, Brazil-TV, Zambia-radio, Venezuela-radio + printed materials.

3.5 Teachers and Teacher Training

There are several categories of teachers for nonformal educational programmes:

(i) Teachers of the formal system specially trained to teach at primary level working on a part-time basis;

(ii) Teachers who have been specially trained for nonformal education programmes;

(iii) Personnel with expertise in various fields but not necessarily professional teachers, such as social workers, worker educators, "popular educators", vocational trainers, information specialists, extension workers in health, agriculture, etc., skilled workers, craftsmen, etc.;

(iv) Volunteers including retired persons, students, and members of the clergy.

In most developing countries, categories (i), (iii) and (iv) are usually available but it is very rare to find category (ii).

All these categories need preservice or inservice training to function effectively in NFE. Many countries have short inservice programmes which give the minimum competencies, but few have adequate preservice programmes. For economic reasons, developing countries have to benefit from all available human resources and take steps to train them to play the role of teachers in nonformal programmes.

Many of these teachers received modest allowances which were less than the salaries of formal primary school teachers while some worked on a voluntary basis. The justification for paying them lower salaries was the reduction in daily hours of teaching and lower qualifications demanded of nonformal teachers.

3.6 Finance and Other Resources

The principal sources of funds for NFE are:

- national or local government budgets
- NGOs and voluntary donations
- intergovernmental agencies
- multilateral and bilateral aid

Donations in cash and kind are made by the target community, for example through gifts of land, buildings, teaching materials and voluntary teaching. In general, nonformal approaches, as practised today are found to be cheaper than formal education because of the following factors:

- condensed curriculum (generally 2-3 years)
- shorter daily teaching time
- use of community and private premises
- lower pay for instructors

3.7 Policy-making, Planning and Organization

It is found that in most cases, the national governments take major responsibility for programmes, and either establish NFE within its existing administrative structure or create a separate department. Some governments (e.g., India) give financial support of NGOs and local projects. The need to have co-ordination among various ministries and departments besides education, such as health, agriculture, rural development sports, social services and economic affairs has been recognized for preventing overlap and making maximum use of available resources. This co-operation is seen even at programme level where resource persons from various fields function as instructors. However, the need for participatory planning and involvement of learners and other personnel at all levels and in all aspects of the process is recognized to be necessary for the success of programmes. Small projects which have been planned and implemented by NGOs at the local level with learner and community participation have been found to be quite successful.

4. ISSUES FOR PLANNING AND RESEARCH

Flexibility, diversity and often uncertainty are among the important characteristics of nonformal and non-conventional approaches to primary level education as opposed to the rigidity, homogeneity, uniformity and certainty obtaining in formal education with reference to aspects such as the structure, clientele, curriculum, content, learning/teaching methodologies and materials, monitoring and evaluation, teachers and management. Hence the problem faced by educational planners in the context of an urgent present day problem: How could one meet the challenge of planning for flexibility, diversity and uncertainty in the provision of primary level education for out-of-school learners? Considering the nature of NFE educational planners have raised an even more fundamental question: "Can nonformal education be effectively planned and if so, in what ways and by whom?" (Evans, 1981, p. 11).

In response to this question Evans raises a number of relevant issues which should receive the attention of planners. Considering NFE as a component of the whole integrated concept of the education system existing in equal partnership with the formal system, he asserts as a basic premise that "the planning of nonformal education becomes a process which must take place in the context of planning for the complete range of educational activities in society" (ibid, p. 12). Assuming that the success of nonformal programmes has been due to "characteristics incompatible with large bureaucracies" such as their flexibility, the question arises whether NFE should be planned and organized as a national system which parallels the formal system or decentralized and left in the hands of the individual practitioners at the local level. Should NFE be primarily a public enterprise or an activity that is best left in the hands of volunteers and religious organizations, or both? Referring to planning at the national level, Evans (ibid, p. 69) favours that it "should be much more an exercise in what might be called 'minimal planning', where the emphasis is placed on policy alternatives and on the qualitative aspects of education".

The preservation of the character and strength of NFE and the effective mobilization of local resources depend to a great extent on the extent of participation and control that is made possible at the local level.

Another issue concerns the improvement of the quality of NFE. The further development of NFE does not lie in the direction of attempting to make nonformal more and more like formal. The strategy should be to develop curricula, teaching/learning methodologies, and evaluation and monitoring practices which are unique and characteristic of NFE, independent of the formal models, thereby developing NFE in its own right and not as a substitute. Self-learning,

peer-tutoring, inter-learning and self-evaluation are among the innovative strategies and practices that deserve serious consideration in this regard.

Evans refers to some positive aspects and potentialities of the non-formal system in planning to accommodate some of the features mentioned above:

> A major contribution of nonformal education is to free planners from the very limited set of alternatives provided by the schooling model and to open a broad new range of design possibilities. Using a set of dimensions can provide planners, especially at the project level, with the basis for systematic design procedures that give serious consideration to the full range of alternatives, and can result in a learning environment, or curriculum in the most general sense, which is the most effective way of meeting educational needs (ibid, p. 31).

How does one cope with the 'diversity versus homogeneity' dilemma encountered in the nonformal and formal system? A possible solution would be to think of "a differentiated set of planning procedures with different methods for different categories of programmes" (ibid, p. 64) instead of a single planning strategy.

Last but not the least is the importance of learner participation; besides contributing to make the programme more relevant and meaningful to the learners, it helps to develop skills, motivate them and enhance self reliance.

5. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORMAL, NONFORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING - PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

NFE does not exist in a social vacuum, and therefore to be effective has to have strong horizontal linkages to the community environment and the pre-existing modes of informal learning. These include the influences of family, elders, peer groups, religious and political institutions, employers, social and cultural events, and the mass media.

Similarly, NFE fails to be a true alternative if there is a disadvantageous dichotomy between it and formal education. A Unesco/Unicef Regional Seminar on UPE in Latin America has concluded that:

> "formal and nonformal education must be conceived as mutually complementary. Nonformal programmes must be completed by establishing and developing links with formal education. On the other hand, formal programmes, methods and orgnaizations must be more flexible and nonformal whenever possible ... The main danger is that two educational systems of different quality and prestige will develop, and thus contribute to perpetuating and increasing the existing socio-economic disparities" (Unesco/ Unicef, 1987, p. 13).

This danger must be overcome. It therefore needs to be recognised that NFE has a valid role to play in educational provision because it can make a contribution which formal education cannot. Nonformal approaches should be seen as part of a broader vision in which

> "formal, nonformal and informal modes of learning can and should constitute the building blocks of a nation-wide comprehensive learning network in each country cemented into one meaningful mosaic by the concept of lifelong and recurrent learning opportunities for all" (Ahmed, 1982, p. 139).

Proposals for introducing alternative non-conventional approaches to primary level education have always been in danger of being regarded as offering second rate alternatives to 'real education'. It is inevitable that the debate on UPE had been linked with the debate on Universalization of Basic Education (UBE) since what had been proposed in the 1970's as a temporary crash programme to meet the basic minimum learning needs of children had been transformed into a new concept and a new strategy to meet the challenge of UPE. The recommendation of the Faure Report that:

> *Universal basic education, in a variety of forms depending on possibilities and needs, should be the top priority for educational policies in the 1970's (Faure, et al., 1972, p. 192)*

had been followed up and linked to UPE by Phillips as follows:

> *At present, however, as later chapters will show, it is not feasible to universalize the human right to education except*

> *by a shorter cycle which provides for the mass of drop-outs. For at least a decade or two the role of UPE (universal primary education) in bringing the mass of educationally deprived children above the educational poverty line probably has to be assumed by UBE (universal basic education) together with supporting services of a nonformal kind for the purpose of literacy retention and recuperation of drop-outs (Philipps, 1975, p. 8).*

In defending the need for the existence of a dual system - one providing a "sound minimum primary education system of the conventional kind", and another which provides "a minimum form of functional literacy, similar to that which is given in adult functional literacy programmes" to children outside the formal system - he states:

> *The existence of such a dual system may be regarded as discriminatory but surely it is less discriminatory than the unconscious present discrimination of giving children no education at all (ibid, p. 158).*

Querying whether basic education is a tool of liberation or exploitation, Mbilinyi makes the following critical comment:

> *Because of the lack of financial and other resources, basic education is to be low-cost, cheap education for the masses - i.e., its form and content is determined by the material base of underdeveloped society. This also means it will contribute to the reproduction of the same underdeveloped material base, and to the reproduction of the exploited and dominated position of the masses within the society itself (Mbilinyi, 1977, p. 494).*

It is clear from the above that any proposals for radical restructuring of primary education are bound to be met with strong criticisms and resistance.

One of the main socio-political barriers to the development of nonformal approaches, particularly in the developing countries, is the power and control exerted by those who want to maintain the traditional formal system and devalue the nonformal structures as inferior substitutes. This raises an important issue regarding the equivalence of the nonformal programmes in relation to the formal system and their acceptability for purposes of employment or re-entry to the formal main-stream. The problem of assessment for accreditation and equivalence becomes critical in this context:

> *The key to such acceptability lies in the assessment system. Alternative 'basic systems' have been devalued precisely because they are not seen to be leading anywhere (except possibly back to the farm). Once it can be proved that a certain level of publicly certified performance can lead learners on and up in the struggle for individual betterment, which, for good or ill, is part of everyone's aspirations, then the mode of getting there will also be accepted (Hawes, 1983, p. 135).*

The need to reinforce interaction among different elements of a basic level of education has been stressed (Unicef-Unesco Joint Working Group, 1984, p. 34):

> *"Strengthening the mutually supportive relationship between early childhood programmes, primary education, literacy and post-literacy programmes and viewing them from a broad perspective of a basic level of education geared to the community's total learning needs is an essential element of the tasks to be undertaken".*

The quest for effective personnel, adequate physical facilities and financial resources, untapped potentials for both human and material resources and evaluation of achievement are other issues which are being discussed (Coombs, Prosser, Ahmed, 1973, pp. 55-76).

A wide and comprehensive range of general principles and key concepts to guide the process of UPE have been formulated and recommended by the International Conference on Education, 39th Session, Geneva, October 1984, Final Report, p. 28.

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- Bibliographie sélective -

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